

Clark puts priest on restriction

■ Investigators look into an allegation of sexual misconduct dating to 1970s.

BY STAFF WRITER

DOUG MANDELARO

Bishop Matthew Clark has placed restrictions on a priest pending further investigation into an allegation of what the diocese termed "sexual misconduct" in the 1970s, Diocese of Rochester officials said Thursday.

The Rev. Robert Hammond will not be allowed to perform any sacramental function or celebrate Mass in any public setting, said Michael Tedesco, Clark's spokesman.

In an emergency case of impending death, he could perform last rites.

Private investigators will present findings to a panel advising Clark that is chaired by former Monroe County Sheriff Andrew Meloni Jr.; it will make a recommendation to the bishop.

Under new rules approved by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops last fall, Clark will confer with Vatican officials in Rome on final disposition of the case.

Hammond is living in a pri-

vate home and is not assigned to a parish, Tedesco said. Hammond could not immediately be reached.

He resigned as pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church, Irondequoit, in 2000 for personal reasons not related to any criminal activity, Tedesco said.

Hammond, 63, was ordained in 1967. He served parishes in Newark, Wayne County; Elmira; Hammondsport and Bath in Steuben County; and several Rochester suburbs.

Since April 2002, seven other priests have been suspended or permanently removed from active ministry after allegations of sexual abuse involving children.

In an interview Thursday, the alleged victim, who now works for a local corporation and is in his mid-40s, said recent revelations of priest misconduct in the media prompted him to come forward and report the incident.

The alleged incident occurred when he was 19 years old, he said. He was an overnight guest at a cottage after a dinner party with several other people and shared a bed with the priest, he said.

He alleges that Hammond touched his genital area in what the man felt was an inappropriate way. □

E-mail address: dmand@DemocratandChronicle.com